



WHO

ARE

YOU
WEARING?

Fashion is a form of self-expression; on a daily basis we choose the clothes we wear and they form part of our identity. The way we dress can reveal details about our culture, values and personalities.

The question — Who Are You Wearing? — puts the focus on the people that make our clothes and considers their ideas, skill and labour.

Celebrating local talent, this exhibition provides a platform for ten future forward fashion designers. The works on display are inspired by their lived experiences, cultural heritage and the places they call home in Western Sydney.

featuring

Armando, CHAINMAIL, Frika Activewear, Ilham A Ismail,
Jasmine Khayat, Lakshmi Bee, Marky Atelier, Nicole Oliveria,
Niza Khan and Public Island Society.

'Who Are You Wearing?' is presented in partnership with Western Sydney Fashion Festival and The Social Outfit.

Frika Activewear



Photographer: Angelina Way



Ig: @frika.activewear

Inspired by bold and bright African prints, Frika is an activewear brand created and designed by Alies Bol. Born in Sudan, Bol struggled to identify with the products on offer in Australian retail spaces noticing a lack of African representation and black-owned businesses. Since 2018 Bol has studied, networked, crowdfunded and travelled to launch her own commercial activewear label.

Boasting vibrant and colourful patterns, Bol's designs are based on traditional African prints representing people, places and culture. Many

rounds of sample prints were required to successfully transfer them onto the stretchy activewear fabrics that differ widely from the tougher cottons traditionally used.

Bol designs inclusive casual wear for all genders, age groups and cultural backgrounds but finds her biggest support in the younger generation African migrants. She is part of the Global Sisters Network who support and empower women in business.

The Social Outfit



Ig: @thesocialoutfit

The Social Outfit is a fashion label with a difference, founded in 2012. The social enterprise, based in Newtown in Sydney's Inner West, provides employment and training to people from refugee and new migrant communities through their ethical manufacturing studio and retail store.

With a particular focus on female humanitarian migrants, The Social Outfit offers paid opportunities in sewing and retail. Sewing technicians use primarily pre-existing fabrics to produce the garments sold in the store. Through fabric donations and collaborations

with industry partners The Social Outfit has saved over 10.5 tonnes of fabric from becoming textile waste.

Since 2015, The Social Outfit has engaged community groups from western Sydney to produce new collection prints. Past Community Print Projects saw collaborations with Fairfield High School's Intensive English Centre and migrant women from Liverpool and Merrylands. In 2022, The Social Outfit partnered with Fairfield City Museum & Gallery and Think and DO Tank Foundation to create a print for their upcoming Spring/Summer collection.

Lakshmi Bee



Photographer: Mohan Raj. Models Monica & Christina Gorjok.



Ig: @lakshmibee

Lakshmi Bee is a fashion and lifestyle brand created by mother and daughter duo Lakshmi and Susan Gowda. They are purpose driven, on a mission to make the world a better place by creating sustainable and luxurious pieces of couture, art and home décor.

Coming from a multicultural family including South-Indian and European heritage they have lived abroad and around Australia, but now call western Sydney home. Lakshmi and Susan describe themselves as ‘global caretakers who draw inspiration from the natural beauty of our planet in God’s living creation.’

Lakshmi Bee produces one-of-a-kind, handmade pieces combining pre-existing materials, fabric offcuts and vintage finds. They have embraced upcycling and repurposing as a core part of their practice and encourage us to re-think what we wear. Their answer to fast fashion is to invest in quality pieces, to mend rather than discard and think of creative ways to re-use items we already have.

CHAINMAIL



Ig: @chainmailthelabel

CHAINMAIL is a Western Sydney clothing label founded by creative directors Natalie Ang and Gillian Kayrooz. The label launched at an underground event in 2018 supported by emerging musicians and artists. At its core, CHAINMAIL promotes collaboration between creatives from the area to showcase a unique local perspective.

Made by and for Western Sydney, CHAINMAIL creates comfortable, sustainable, affordable and minimalist streetwear. Over the past years they have built a community and following

by organising one-off events selling limited collections captured in nostalgic photography.

In 2022, CHAINMAIL returns with CHAINMAIL: Capsule 3. Featuring artwork by Western Sydney textile and illustrative artist SAARA138, this new release was presented at their most unique event to date inspired by car boot exchanges with friends and regular visits to local car parks as a social hangout space.

Armando



Photographer: Edward Tran



Ig: @armandosclothing

Born in the Philippines, fashion designer Armando Crisostomo challenges cultural notions of masculinity and gender. Inspired by his own experience pursuing a career in fashion rather than living up to family expectations, Crisostomo aims to encourage men to take risks and not be confined by gender boundaries.

After graduating from the Billy Blue College of Design in 2019 he launched his self-titled label, Armando. Bold colours, geometric shapes and vibrant patterns characterise Crisostomo's designs, taking inspiration from popular culture and his Filipino heritage. His often quirky prints

act as a reminder of the small things that make us happy.

Armando's unisex designs, including overalls, shorts, shirts and crop tops, have been showcased at runway events such as Western Sydney Fashion Festival and featured by Vogue Australia and Pedestrian.tv.

Public Island Society



Photographer: Kaptured By Faith Studios



Ig: @publicislandsociety

Public Island Society is founded by Australian born Tongan fashion designer, Iki Haangana. His brand blurs the lines between high-end fashion and street-wear and includes elements and textures from his Polynesian heritage. Signature pieces incorporate fala — woven pandanus leaves traditionally used as floor mats or wrapped around the waist - applied on dresses, skirts and jackets.

Based in Mt Druitt, Haangana attributes his creativity to his cultural background and his garments pay homage to his parents' island

home. His work is not seasonal or responsive to trends, rather his designs develop and evolve naturally enabling him to return to and build on previous designs.

Haangana describes his style as 'over the top, off-beat elegance' and sees the Public Island Society brand as a way to bridge the gap between fashion and culture. The name Public Island Society plays on the concept of creating a niche-like sub-culture through his clothing.

KHAYAT



Ig: @khayatofficial

Jasmine Khayat graduated from TAFE's Fashion Design Studio in 2020 and presented her work at the Western Sydney Fashion Festival a year later. Her namesake brand, KHAYAT, is set to launch in 2022 focussing on slow fashion through minimalistic and high-quality design ensuring longevity and sustainability.

Khayat's process begins with sketches and illustrations—building and reworking the designs in black and white to allow for further interpretation and change. The pieces on display were designed in her home studio where she

created the patterns as well. Bringing back fabrics from her travels to Hong Kong, India and China, Khayat collaborated with a local tailor in Wentworthville and a seamstress in Toongabbie to produce the final works.

Born and raised in western Sydney, Khayat wanted to work with craftspeople and businesses near her home acknowledging their skill and experience. She sees fashion as a collaborative process where many people from different backgrounds work together to create something new.

Marky Atelier



Ig: @markyatelier

Marky Duong, Founder and Creative Director of Marky Atelier, migrated from Vietnam to Australia in 2004. He settled in Cabramatta and graduated from Billy Blue College of Design in 2013. Duong's style is timeless and a true reflection of his love for fashion.

Client interest in his couture pieces gave Duong the confidence to launch Marky Atelier in 2017 — a hybrid brand combining high-end design and ready to wear apparel. Duong works closely together with his family's textile business

in Vietnam. His work has been featured in Elle and Harper's Bazaar Vietnam.

Duong speaks openly about the difficulties he faced in building a successful business as well as his ongoing battle with depression. Through his brand he raises awareness for mental health and aims to promote healing and understanding. His signature MD monogram was created during the COVID-19 lockdown and signals a new era for Marky Atelier.

Nicole Oliveria



Ig: @nicoleoliveria

Based in Mt Druitt, Nicole Oliveria utilises fashion design to explore themes of identity, heritage and culture. An Australian born Filipino, Oliveria's work investigates her sense of place in the contemporary western Sydney Filipino diaspora as well as Filipino history.

Oliveria creates one-off, ready-to-wear pieces, playing with codes from couture and streetwear. The garments are both Filipino and western Sydney inspired and created using second-hand clothing and deadstock materials.

Collaging is a large component of Oliveria's initial research. The cut-and-paste technique allows her to play, juxtaposing images and stories, to arrive at an authentic look and feel. For her latest collection, Oliveria was prompted by the question, "What stories created the place I call home?"

Oliveria is one of the directors of opnsrco, a collective that aims to unify and bring awareness to the western Sydney creative community. Oliveria's work has been showcased at exhibitions and runway events as well as published in Black Magazine and Vogue Australia.

Ilham A Ismail



Photographer: Meredith Cohen



Ig: @ilham.a.ismail

Ilham A Ismail's journey as a fashion designer started as a young girl hand sewing dresses out of tablecloths and fabrics sourced in Cabramatta. Since graduating from the University of Technology Sydney in 2015, the Lebanese-Australian designer has presented at fashion shows around the world including New Zealand, Italy and Dubai.

Ismail is a Muslim designer adhering to Islamic principles, though she is advocating for her work to be viewed in the context of contemporary Australian fashion rather than being labelled 'modest fashion'.

Known for her focus on fabric embellishment and use of innovative textiles, Ismail is exploring ways to establish a more sustainable practice. A collaboration with her husband, who is a furniture maker, has resulted in a range of recycled wooden bags as well as a dress made entirely out of wood offcuts. Now a mother of two, Ismail has recently added a kidswear collection to her label.

Niza Khan



Photographer: Shanni Sun



Ig: @nizakhan__

Through her designs, Niza Khan challenges the impact of colonialism and Eurocentrism on the fashion industry. The recent honours fashion graduate from the University of Technology Sydney started her research through wardrobe studies; analysing the ways in which we interact with and value the clothing we own.

Khan is an Australian born Indo-Fijian and a study of her own wardrobe revealed two distinct dimensions, Indian and Western, where Western garments are for everyday wear and Indian garments for special or cultural occasions. The understanding that her wardrobe reflected an

identity-based tension experienced widely by the Indian diaspora living in western societies formed the inspiration for her own collection.

In her work, Khan embraces traditional Indian techniques such as Zardozi embroidery and weaving along with her personal interest in knits, to establish a dialogue and bring together her two cultural perspectives. Family photographs have inspired some of the silhouettes further embedding personal connections and memories into her textiles.

Western Sydney Fashion Festival



Photographer: Stephen Pham



Ig: @westernsydneyfashionfest

Western Sydney Fashion Festival (WSFF) is an annual runway event showcasing the diversity of Sydney's West through fashion. Founded in 2015 by Thuy Nguyen, WSFF was first held at the Fairfield School of Arts in front of a modest crowd. In 2021, WSFF presented a line-up of eleven local fashion designer at a sold-out Cabra-Vale Diggers.

The community-led event places emphasis on inclusion and recognition of the cultures and communities that make up western Sydney. Acting as a springboard, WSFF has created opportunities for culturally diverse designers and models to be featured nationally and

internationally at events including Australian Fashion Week and Asia Fashion Week.

WSFF has worked in collaboration with organisations that share their community-minded values including The Social Outfit, Diversity Arts Australia, Ethnic Model Management, Migrant Resource Centre Liverpool, Blacktown Arts and Fairfield City Council.